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RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA IMMEDIATE 5566
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 7896
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 9375
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHKO/USDAO TOKYO JA IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001731

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: DPJ BACKTRACKING ON SUPPORT FOR OEF REFUELING
MISSION?

REF: A. TOKYO 1595

[1](#)B. TOKYO 1706

[1](#)C. TOKYO 1575

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Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, a.i. JAMES P. ZUMWALT, REASONS 1.4(B)
AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) will end Japan's refueling support to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) if it takes the reins of government in the August 30 election, according to July 29 Japanese press reports. Media quote DPJ President Hatoyama as saying that if the party wins the election, it will terminate the current anti-terror special measures law authorizing the refueling mission when the law expires in January 2010. Officials from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) strongly criticized the DPJ for the apparent change from recent statements by Hatoyama and DPJ Secretary General Okada, which indicated the party was "not opposed" to extending the mission. Contacts note the apparent wavering over support for the mission may come from a DPJ appeal to the Social Democratic Party (SDP), a possible partner, depending on the election results, but one that opposes the refueling. DPJ representatives have told Embassy Tokyo that the party would plan to replace refueling with other support in Afghanistan. End summary.

To Refuel or Not to Refuel

[1](#)2. (C) In recent weeks, the DPJ had moderated the tone of earlier positions on security matters, from Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) revision to support for the refueling mission (Ref A). As recently as October 2008, the DPJ in its policy manifesto called for "drastic revision" to the SOFA and said it would end OEF refueling support if and when it took over the Japanese government, as there had not been an examination of the refueling mission's effectiveness against terrorism. Earlier this week, however, the DPJ released its Policy Index for 2009, which carried no statements on the refueling mission (Ref B).

[1](#)3. (C) DPJ leaders have indicated in past weeks that the party will take a more "pragmatic line" on security issues. Specifically on refueling, Secretary General Okada said in a July 24 press conference that the DPJ was not opposed to

approving OEF support "after making necessary amendments."
Senior LDP leaders have harshly criticized the DPJ for its
shifting policies, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Kawamura
telling the media July 29 that he doubted whether the DPJ was
speaking with a unified voice on the refueling matter.

Lack of Support From SDP For Refueling Mission the Reason for
Shift?

14. (C) Media reports point to the fact that the DPJ does not
hold a majority in the Upper House of the Diet as likely at
the root of the party's changing stance on the refueling
issue. Even if the DPJ has a strong showing in the August 30
election, the party will have to coordinate with smaller
parties such as the SDP to maintain control in the Upper
House (which will have its own election in July 2010). SDP
President Fukushima has said that the party "expects" to be
part of a "coalition government," publicly opposes the
refueling mission, and has also called on the DPJ to
"drastically revise" the SOFA.

Replace Refueling With Something Else?

15. (C) If the DPJ wins the August 30 election and does, in
fact, discontinue support for OEF, it will not do so
immediately upon taking power, DPJ Representative Shu
Watanabe told visiting senior Department of Defense officials
July 16. While not saying when the DPJ might end the
mission, Watanabe said that the party would push for
different contributions to Afghanistan should the refueling

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cease, a position that other DPJ members have taken in
statements to the media. Watanabe did not, however, offer
specifics on what additional contributions might entail.

Comment

16. (C) Although the DPJ had stopped short of explicitly
supporting Japan's OEF mission, its statements of late had
clearly indicated an increasingly pragmatic approach on this
and other security issues. The apparent about-face on OEF
support may be one indication of the DPJ's taking into
consideration the policy positions of possible coalition
government partners, such as the SDP and People's New Party,
both of which have expressed strong opposition to refueling.
Given the diverse nature of the DPJ's membership, however,
wavering on this and potentially other policy issues is not
particularly surprising, and even DPJ officials admit that
these kinds of contradictory statements may continue (Ref C).

Failure to elicit a coordinated set of clear messages on
security (and other) issues, though, will give the LDP an
opportunity to focus on the DPJ's lack of leadership
experience in the election campaign. End comment.

ZUMWALT